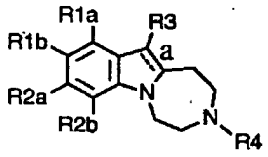
**Specification**

Please replace the paragraph of formula I on page 3, line 17 to page 5, line 24 with the following paragraph:

A compound of formula I:




**I**

where a is a single bond or double bond, and where

R1a, R1b, R2a and R2b are each independently

(a) H, Cl, Br, I, F, CN, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, OR5, CONR5R6, COR5, $CO[[2]]_2R5$, $Y(CH_2)_mXR5$ or $YC(O)(CH_2)_mXR5$, where m = 0-3, Y = $CH_2$, S, O, or NR6, X = $CH_2$, S, O, NR6;

(b) $(CH[[2]]_2)_pAr$ where p = 0-3 and Ar is aryl or heteroaryl optionally substituted with one or more of the following: H, halogen, CN, $NO_2$, OR7, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, SR7, $SO_2R7$, $SO_2NR7R8$, NR7R8, CONR7R8, NR7COR8, NR7CONR8R9, $CO_2R7$, COR7, or R7; or

(c) linear or branched $C_1$-$C_8$ alkyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkenyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkynyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkenyl, or $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkynyl; wherein any of these groups may be optionally substituted with one or more of the following:halogen, CN, $NO_2$, COR7, OR7, NR7R8, SR7, $CO[[2]]_2R7$, CONR7R8 or NR7COR8; and where

R3 is

(a) H, Cl, Br, I, F, CN, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, alkyl, Ar, OR5, SR5, CHO, CONR5R6, COR5, $CO[[2]]_2R5$, $(Y)_o(CH[[2]]_2)_nXR5$, C(O)C(O)XR5, $(Y)_o(CH_2)_nC(O)XR5$,

$C(O)(CH[[2]]_2)_nXR5$, $(Y)_o(CH[[2]]_2)_nN(R6)C(O)R5$, $(Y)_o(CH[[2]]_2)_nN(R6)S(O)_2R5$

$(Y)_o(CH[[2]]_2)_nN(R6)C(O)OR5$, $(Y)_o(CH[[2]]_2)_nN(R6)C(O)NR5R6$ where o = 0 or 1, n = 0-3, X = $CH_2$, S, O, or NR6 and Y=$CH_2$, S, O or NR6, where Ar is aryl or heteroaryl optionally substituted with one or more of the following: H, halogen, CN, $NO_2$, OR7, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, SR7, $SO_2R7$, $SO_2NR7R8$, NR7R8, CONR7R8, NR7COR8, NR7CONR8R9, $CO_2R7$, COR7, or R7; or

(b) linear or branched $C_1$-$C_8$ alkyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkenyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkynyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkenyl, or $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkynyl; wherein any of these groups may be optionally substituted with one or more of the following: halogen, CN, $NO_2$, COR10, OR10, NR10R8, SR10, $CO[[2]]_2R10$, CONR10R8 or NR10COR8; and where

R4, R5 and R6 are each independently

(a) H, linear or branched $C_1$-$C_8$ alkyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkenyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkynyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkenyl, or $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkynyl; wherein any of these groups other than H may be optionally substituted with one or more of the following: halogen, CN, $NO_2$, COR10, OR10, NR10R11, SR10, $CO[[2]]_2R10$, CONR10R11 or NR10COR11; or where R5 and R6 are linked to form a 3 to 8 member ring; or

(b) $(CH_2)_pAr$ where p = 0-3 and Ar is aryl or heteroaryl optionally substituted with one or more of the following: H, halogen, CN, $NO_2$, OR7, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, SR7, $SO_2R7$, $SO_2NR7R8$, NR7R8, CONR7R8, NR7COR8, NR7CONR8R9, $CO_2R7$, COR7, or R7; and where

R7, R8, and R9 are each independently

(a) H, linear or branched $C_1$-$C_8$ alkyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkenyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkynyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkenyl, or $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkynyl groups, wherein any of these groups other than H may be optionally substituted with halogen, CN, $NO_2$, COR10, OR10, NR10R11, SR10, $CO[[2]]_2R10$, CONR10R11, NR10COR11, NR10CONR11R12, or where R7, R8, or R9 are linked to form a ring; or

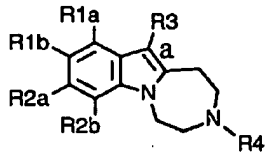
(b) $(CH[[2]]_2)_pAr$ where p = 0-3 and Ar is aryl or heteroaryl optionally substituted with one or more of the following: H, halogen, CN, $NO_2$, OR10, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, SR10, $SO_2$R10, $SO_2$NR10R11, NR10R11, CONR10R11, NR10COR11, NR10CONR11R12, $CO_2$R10, COR10, or R10; and where

R10, R11 and R12 are each independently H, linear or branched $C_1$-$C_8$ alkyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkenyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkynyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkenyl, or $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkynyl;

or a stereoisomer or pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

Please replace the paragraph of formula I on page 9, line 1 to page 11, line 27 with the following paragraph:

A compound of formula I:




I

where a is a single bond or double bond, and where

R1a, R1b, R2a and R2b are each independently

(a) H, Cl, Br, I, F, CN, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, OR5, CONR5R6, COR5, $CO[[2]]_2R5$, $Y(CH_2)_mXR5$ or $YC(O)(CH_2)_mXR5$, where m = 0-3, Y = $CH_2$, S, O, or NR6, X = $CH_2$, S, O, NR6;

(b) $(CH[[2]]_2)_pAr$ where p = 0-3 and Ar is aryl or heteroaryl optionally substituted with one or more of the following: H, halogen, CN, $NO_2$, OR7, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, SR7, $SO_2R7$, $SO_2NR7R8$, NR7R8, CONR7R8, NR7COR8, NR7CONR8R9, $CO_2R7$, COR7, or R7; or

(c) linear or branched $C_1$-$C_8$ alkyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkenyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkynyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkenyl, or $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkynyl; wherein any of these groups may be optionally substituted with one or more of the following:halogen, CN, $NO_2$, COR7, OR7, NR7R8, SR7, $CO[[2]]_2R7$, CONR7R8 or NR7COR8; and where

R3 is

(a) H, Cl, Br, I, F, CN, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, alkyl, Ar, OR5, SR5, CHO, CONR5R6, COR5, $CO[[2]]_2R5$, $(Y)_o(CH[[2]]_2)_nXR5$, C(O)C(O)XR5, $(Y)_o(CH_2)_nC(O)XR5$, C(O) $(CH[[2]]_2)_nXR5$, $(Y)_o(CH[[2]]_2)_nN(R6)C(O)R5$, $(Y)_o(CH[[2]]_2)_nN(R6)S(O)_2R5$, $(Y)_o(CH[[2]]_2)_nN(R6)C(O)OR5$, $(Y)_o(CH[[2]]_2)_nN(R6)C(O)NR5R6$ where o = 0 or 1

n = 0-3, X = $CH_2$, S, O, or NR6 and Y=$CH_2$, S, O or NR6, where Ar is aryl or heteroaryl optionally substituted with one or more of the following: H, halogen, CN, $NO_2$, OR7, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, SR7, $SO_2R7$, $SO_2NR7R8$, NR7R8, CONR7R8, NR7COR8, NR7CONR8R9, $CO_2R7$, COR7, or R7; or

(b) linear or branched $C_1$-$C_8$ alkyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkenyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkynyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkenyl, or $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkynyl; wherein any of these groups may be optionally substituted with one or more of the following: halogen, CN, $NO_2$, COR10, OR10, NR10R8, SR10, $CO[[2]]_2R10$, CONR10R8 or NR10COR8; and where

R4, R5 and R6 are each independently

(a) H, linear or branched $C_1$-$C_8$ alkyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkenyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkynyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkenyl, or $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkynyl; wherein any of these groups other than H may be optionally substituted with one or more of the following: halogen, CN, $NO_2$, COR10, OR10, NR10R11, SR10, $CO[[2]]_2R10$, CONR10R11 or NR10COR11; or where R5 and R6 are linked to form a 3 to 8 member ring; or

(b) $(CH_2)_pAr$ where p = 0-3 and Ar is aryl or heteroaryl optionally substituted with one or more of the following: H, halogen, CN, $NO_2$, OR7, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, SR7, $SO_2R7$, $SO_2NR7R8$, NR7R8, CONR7R8, NR7COR8, NR7CONR8R9, $CO_2R7$, COR7, or R7; and where

R7, R8, and R9 are each independently

(a) H, linear or branched $C_1$-$C_8$ alkyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkenyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkynyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkenyl, or $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkynyl groups, wherein any of these groups other than H may be optionally substituted with halogen, CN, $NO_2$, COR10, OR10, NR10R11, SR10, $CO[[2]]_2R10$, CONR10R11, NR10COR11, NR10CONR11R12, or where R7, R8, or R9 are linked to form a ring; or

(b) $(CH[[2]]_2)_pAr$ where p = 0-3 and Ar is aryl or heteroaryl optionally substituted with one or more of the following: H, halogen, CN, $NO_2$, OR10, $CF_3$, $OCF_3$, SR10, $SO_2R10$, $SO_2NR10R11$, NR10R11, CONR10R11, NR10COR11, NR10CONR11R12, $CO_2R10$, COR10, or R10; and where

R10, R11 and R12 are each independently H, linear or branched $C_1$-$C_8$ alkyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkenyl, linear or branched $C_2$-$C_8$ alkynyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkyl, $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkenyl, or $C_3$-$C_8$ cycloalkynyl;

or a stereoisomer or pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.